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Arthur Cravan

Arthur Cravan vs. Jack Johnson

"It was on a spring afternoon of 1916 that I fought Jack Johnson," Arthur Cravan says. "The match took place in the bull ring of Barcelona, Spain, and went seven rounds."

I asked him, "What were your impressions of him?" I repeat his words more or less as he spoke: "He's a great fellow," he said, "he has every quality of the fighter except the punch. I know it is generally believed in this country that he has a terrific punch, but I have fought him and I see that this is not quite so; he has every physical quality, he's quick as lightning, his knowledge is immense and he's terribly clever; a flyweight couldn't be better—I have seen him fool lightweights and leave them miles behind—in short; he's a marvel, but he has not a clean punch, he doesn't hit like a Sam Langford. A skinny fellow will hit sharp, with edges, but about Johnson there is something too rounded and enveloped, and when he hits you'd think his glove was several ounces heavier than it really is."

"In my fight with him I found it almost impossible to get through his left, and he has wonderful strength holding. Once, aiming at my stomach, he missed me by a fraction of a second—I caught his tremendous punch on my elbow; he laughed and I'm sure I laughed back. . . . I knew I was to be beaten, though I ought to say that for two years I had no gloves on, practically."

"Johnson trains every day of his life, but when getting in shape for a fight, he wants to make people think he's conscientious about it, he will walk through the streets with a stick, covered all over with sweaters; often he has a man follow him at a distance, pretending he can't keep up the pace."

"How does he stand in the ring?" I said. Cravan left his chair and explained: "His left droops a bit, and that is the hand he uses mostly, leaning on his right leg. He's a defensive fighter."

"There's something of the parvenu in Johnson; he bought furniture in Barcelona for twenty-seven thousand *pesetas*, and a little after, standing in the hotel lobby with him, near another man, he

said to me, 'Tell that fellow,' referring to his purchase. 'But I don't know him,' I argued. 'Never mind, tell him,' said the great exile. There's something of the parvenu about him, but more of the king; his eye-lids are king-like; he's a Louis XIV. At the hotel, whenever a journalist turned up, he would say, 'One of these bloody pressmen;' a journalist has to wait two or three hours for him. Whenever a bill was presented, 'mañana, mañana,' he would say; then, 'Asking money from the champion of the world,' he would add, contemptuously. I do not say this to run him down; he's a sharper and at other times quite a child."

"Outside the ring he's a man of scandal—I like him for that—eccentric, he's lively, good-natured and gloriously vain; anything that has to do with Johnson has to do with a crowd of policemen."

"I have a great admiration for him. I had known him slightly in Paris before we met in Barcelona to sign up for the fight; it was at a night-place, and, as I did not want his referee, he became angry; he hit me on the jaw and the thing ended by the whole crowd jumping in. Next day the Spanish papers said, 'Such were sons of heroes to stand in between.' We neither of us were in good training for our match in the ring; I soon lost my wind. The chief difficulty I encountered was his left—he kept me away with it. He's about two inches shorter than I am."

"After Poe, Whitman, Emerson, he is the most glorious American. If there is a revolution here I shall fight to have him enthroned King of the United States."

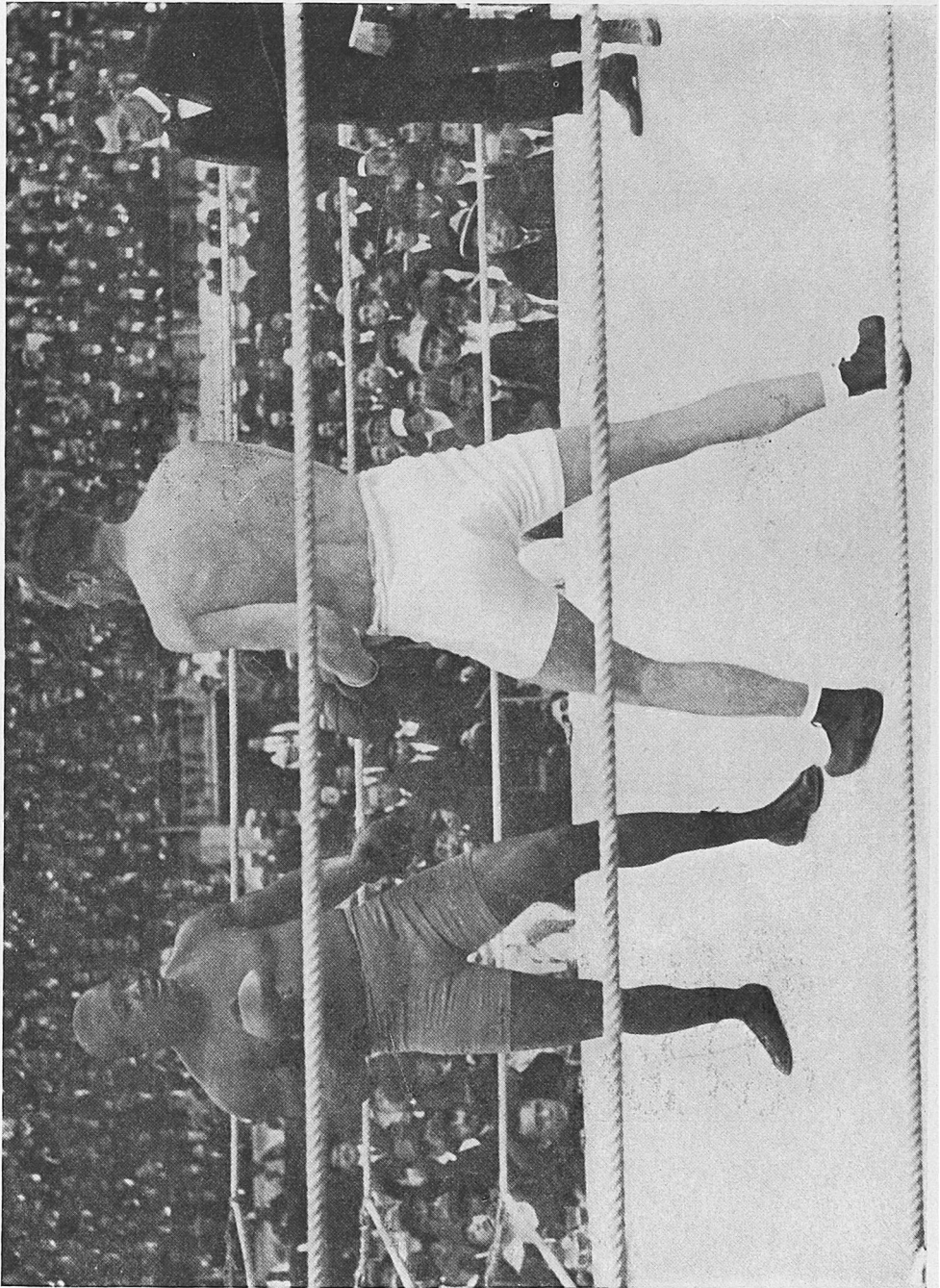


Chorus Girl

Her voice was like rose-fragrance waltzing in the wind.
 She seemed a shadow, stained with shadow-colors,
 Swimming through waves of sunlight . . .
 Perhaps her heart was an old minstrel
 Sleepily pawing at his little mandolin.

Maxwell Bodenheim.

MM 59204 8/18



The Johnson-Cravan Fight in Barcelona

